

very pale brown patches on the back and wings. The feet were grey-black and the beak, which was at least  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches long was black. The bird was obviously in an exhausted condition and did not wish to fly, and when put up merely flew about 300 yards at the height of 2-3 feet above the ground to another pool nearby. When swimming it kept its long neck very erect, which made it look unlike a goose on the water.

'The Persian lighthouse-keeper who appeared on the scene when we shot it, said that it had come onto the landing-ground the evening before with about 15 others, and had remained behind when the others flew on. He also had seen a flight of about 2000 of the same bird two weeks before which had spent the night on the landing ground. They had flown off in a north-westerly direction. He said he had seen similar birds in previous flights through, and staying a night here when there was sufficient water for them to come down on.'

The three primary and three secondary feathers sent to us were certainly those of a swan, possibly a Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*). The length of the bill 'at least  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. long' helps to support this view. Bills of other species measured from feathers to tip are smaller. (Bewick's Swan bill 90-98 mm. Mute Swan 73-90 mm.). The distribution of the Whooper Swan is Iceland, North Europe and North Asia. It migrates southward to Central and South Europe, more rarely to North Africa, Central Asia, Persia, India and China. So large a migration of these swans to the shores of the Persian Gulf is unusual and may have been influenced, as suggested, by abnormal climatic conditions.

EDITORS.

#### 14. A NOTE ON BIRDS OF THE SIMLA FOOTHILLS.

Being fairly familiar with the birds of the Delhi district and those of the hills around Simla it has always been the writer's desire to see something of the avifauna of the 'gap' in between—the jungle clad foothills. Six days leave over Christmas last year enabled this ambition to be realised by a very enjoyable stay at the P.W.D. Rest House at Koti (3,500 ft.)  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Kalka on the Simla road. Many hours of scrambling on hillside paths and watching of skies, trees and undergrowth resulted in a record of an interesting mixture of plains and hills birds. The following list applicable to the winter is, of course, of necessity incomplete but may be of interest to others who have speculated on the contents of the 'plains to 4,000 feet' terrain.

(1) *Corvus macrorhynchos*. *The Jungle Crow*. As always the deep caw of this bird is the first greeting to the hills. Common—individuals and small parties. No House Crows seen.

(2) *Dendrocitta vagabunda*. *The Tree Pie*. Common around cultivation. Seen daily.

(3) *Parus major*. *The Grey Tit*. Common—often seen foraging on the ground of the bare terraced fields. No other species of Tits seen.

(4) *Garrulax leucolophus*. *The White-crested Laughing Thrush*. Cackling calls often heard, and seen on two occasions—once when a party was disturbed from thick undergrowth by a woodcutter and a second time when disturbed by a deer. Keeps to the lower parts of the valleys.

(5) *Ianthocincla rufogularis*. *The Rufous-chinned Laughing Thrush*. In spite of its reputation as an inveterate skulker this bird was seen on three occasions; the first time in the open at least four feet from the nearest cover! Another day two of them came some feet out into a ploughed field and spent over 5 minutes in the open affording an excellent opportunity for study of all the detailed points of colour and markings.

(6) *Trochalopteron lineatum*. *The Streaked Laughing Thrush*. Seen fairly frequently particularly in jungle on the edges of cultivation.

(7) *Turdoides somervillei*. *The Jungle Babbler*. Fairly common in the usual fussy parts in the more open country.

(8) *Pomatorhinus erythrogenys*. *The Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler*. Seen once when an individual appeared at the top of a bush to pick off a red berry with the tip of its curved bill—staying to survey the countryside long enough for its description to be noted before descending suddenly into the undergrowth again.

(9) *Peliorneum ruficeps*. *The Spotted Babbler*. Seen on one occasion in thick cover after a wait of 20 minutes in the jungle. Two individuals observed with others heard in adjacent cover.

(10) *Stachyridopsis pyrrhops*. *The Red-billed Babbler*. This bird (with its brown bill!) is common in parties in the jungle clad nullahs and often seen but is so easily disturbed and so quick and restless in its movements that the collection of data for identification with field glasses is a matter of the noting of 'points' a few at a time.

(11) *Ixulus flavicollis*. *The Yellow-naped Ixulus*. Common—in parties particularly in small trees bearing a species of 'oakapple' fruit and often in company with White-Eyes. Presumably these two little species consort to admire each other's white spectacles!

(12) *Leiothrix lutea*. *The Red-billed Leiothrix*. Fairly common in parties in undergrowth.

(13) *Microscelis psaroides*. *The Black Bulbul*.—Why not the 'Grey Bulbul' which would be much more descriptive of its general colour? Fairly common in parties in trees in thick jungle.

(14) *Molpastes cafer*. *The Red-vented Bulbul*. Common particularly around cultivation.

(15) *Molpastes leucogenys*. *The White-cheeked Bulbul*. Very common. Almost every other bird seen is of this species and it seems to abound everywhere—in open country and in thick jungle.

(16) *Certhia himalayana*. *The Himalayan Tree-Creeper*. Fairly common but usually solitary.

(17) *Enicurus maculatus*. *The Spotted Forktail*. Occasionally seen along streams and irrigation channels.

(18) *Monticola rufiventris*. *The Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush*. A pair of these birds were constantly to be seen near the bungalow the female usually making itself evident with its scolding alarm note. Incidentally, I have never found this bird so 'wild and shy' in summer in the Simla hills as the 'Fauna' implies.

(19) **Myophonus caeruleus.** *The Himalayan Whistling Thrush.* Fairly common near the hill streams but with song and calls nothing like as evident as in the summer and rains.

(20) **Eumyias thalassina.** *The Verditer Flycatcher.* Seen on three occasions—solitary.

(21) **Muscicapula tricolor.** *The Slaty-blue Flycatcher.* Occasionally seen in the nullahs near cultivation, the white patches in the tail always being conspicuous.

(22) **Alseonax ruficaudus.** *The Rufous-tailed Flycatcher.* Possibly, a doubtful identification but nothing else seems to fit. Seen on one occasion.

(23) **Niltaya sundara.** *The Rufous-bellied Niltaya.* Seen on two occasions—solitary in low jungle.

(24) **Chelidorhynch hypoxanthum.** *The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.* An unfortunate trivial name for a very attractive and sprightly bird. Common—its poised half drooped wings, fan tail and the flash of bright yellow in its wheeling sallies from tree tops being notable.

(25) **Leucocirca albicollis.** *The White-throated Fantail Flycatcher.* Fairly common and almost as attractive as the last species in spite of its sombre colouring.

(26) **Orthotomus sutorius.** *The Indian Tailor Bird.* Common around habitations—seen daily.

(27) **Franklinia gracilis.** *Franklin's Wren-Warbler.* Seen on a number of occasions in small parties in cultivation and scrub jungle. Identified as Franklin's Warbler in winter plumage but somewhat doubtfully.

(28) **Phylloscopus occipitalis.** *The Large Crowned Willow-Warbler.* Occasionally seen—minus its conspicuous summer song.

(29) **Suya crinigera.** *The Brown Hill-Warbler.* Seen on one occasion only in sparse scrub on open hillside.

(30) **Acridotheres tristis.** *The Common Mynah.* Only noted once.

(31) **Passer rutilans.** *The Cinnamon Sparrow.* Fairly common in ones and twos in trees near habitations. No House Sparrow seen.

(32) **Emberiza cia.** *The Eastern Meadow Bunting.* Seen on two or three occasions on open hillsides in its dull coloured winter plumage.

(33) **Riparia rupestris.** *The Crag Martin.* (Possibly the Dusky Crag Martin?). A flock of 25 to 30 of these birds appeared on two occasions in the river valley below Koti preceding cloudy weather.

(34) **Motacilla cinerea.** *The Grey Wagtail.* Noted once (solitary) on hill stream.

(35) **Anthus hodgsoni.** *The Indian Tree Pipit.* Seen on two occasions on scree and scrub covered hillside.

(36) **Zosterops palpebrosa.** *The White-Eye.* Common—in small parties particularly evident probing into the 'oakapple' fruit of trees in jungle near cultivation.

(37) **Aethopyga siparaja.** *The Yellow-backed Sunbird.* Seen on two occasions but for so short a time that a full description could not be noted,—a possibly doubtful identification therefore.

(38) *Dryobates macci*. *The Fulvous-breasted Pied Woodpecker*. Fairly common. At first taken to be the Brown-fronted Pied Woodpecker but later checked by the complete red crown of the male and the black crown of the female.

(39) *Dryobates himalayensis*. *The Himalayan Pigmy Woodpecker*. Seen only on one occasion near the Rest House.

(40) *Cyanops asiatica*. *The Blue-throated Barbet*. Common. Heard daily and frequently seen in fruit bearing trees.

(41) *Tockus birostris*. *The Grey Hornbill*. Common in small parties in trees both in cultivation and thick jungle. These birds seemed to be of a clearer grey colour than the brownish grey of plains birds.

(42) *Psittacula krameri*. *The Green Parrakeet*. Fairly common. Small flocks and solos.

(43) *Glaucidium cuculoides*. *The Large Barred Owlet*. Seen on one occasion at 11.00 a.m. in thick jungle in the Koshalia river valley.

(44) *Sarcogyps calvus*. *The King Vulture*. Common—seen daily.

(45) *Gyps himalayensis*. *The Himalayan Griffon*. Common—seen daily.

(46) *Neophron percnopterus*. *The Neophron*. Not very common but seen occasionally.

(47) *Milvus migrans*. *The Common Pariah Kite*. Frequently seen in flight but on some occasions suspected to be *M. m. lineatus*, the Black-eared Kite, but not with any certainty.

(48) *Gallus gallus*. *The Red Jungle Fowl*. Common. Heard daily and frequently seen in parties foraging in the undergrowth or flapping away and wheeling into the nearest cover after being disturbed.

Notable absences from the above list which indicate uncommonness, at any rate in winter in the Koti area, are drongos (a careful watch was kept for the Hair Crested Drongo in particular) shrikes, doves and birds of prey. There is no doubt that the chief interest of the Simla foothills lies in the variety of laughing thrushes and babblers to be found in the undergrowth—if one has the patience to stalk these skulkers.

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## 15.—NOTES ON A FEW BIRDS FROM THE SOUTH OF THE TINNEVELLY DISTRICT.

(The numbers refer to Baker and Inglis's *The Birds of S. India*).

60. *Geocichla citrina citrina* (Orange-headed Ground Thrush). Single birds have been seen in December 1931, 1937, 1944, and in March 1943 one stayed in the vicinity of our compound for about a week.

235. *Clamator coromandus* (Red-winged Crested Cuckoo). Single birds have been seen in November 1936, December 1944, February and March 1943. Usually they stayed several days, and the most recent one was very tame, flying in and out of verandahs of several houses.

258. *Ceyx tridactylus tridactylus* (Indian Three-toed Kingfisher). This has been noted by mountain streams not ten miles away on 7th November 1943.